

BLOOMFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

GOLF SUBCOMMITTEE

There was a regular meeting of the above referenced subcommittee held on **Monday, April 28, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.** in Conference Room #5, Bloomfield Town Hall, 800 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT.

Committee members present were: Councilors Rivers, Merritt and Seldon, Jon Colman, Mark Jacobs, Kevin Laing, Ryan Phelps, Mark Mansur, Ciaran Carr

Also present were: Philip K. Schenck, Town Manager, Dave Melesko and India Rodgers, Clerk of Council

Absent was: Jerry Long and Brad Klein

Guest(s): Bill Starkie

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Councilor Merritt, seconded by Councilor Seldon and voted unanimously to approve the minutes of February 24, 2014.

Status of Property

Mr. Ciaran Carr, General Manager of **Wintonbury Hills Golf Course** presented the monthly report of status updates for March 2014 to the committee.

Wintonbury Hills Golf Course opened on April 4, 2014.

There was a slow start to the season and no rounds played for the month of March. The only revenue received was from Food and Beverage with the wrap up of the Meals to Go Program and the St. Patrick's Day Celebration. Pass sales projections will be included towards the end of the month.

Even though revenue goals were missed, the course saved approximately \$10,000 in expenses. The Net Ordinary Income was missed by \$4,000 from budget. Despite the downturn and lack of revenue received for March, as of 4/28/2014, the course is ahead of last year's revenue considering the cold and weather trends thus far.

There is approximately \$106,000 in the Operating Account. A more positive cash flow should generate in the months of April and May. Management is expected to return approximately \$50,000 back to the town.

In addition, the course had some savings in labor costs of \$3,000 and quite a significant savings in Cost of Goods sold in Food & Beverage of approximately \$13,000.

The Pro Shop Inventory is currently \$45,000. Management would like to tailor their product inventory for a better return rate. The replenishment of inventory depends on the product requested. Wintonbury Hills did receive some new clothing lines to promote growth for increased sales at the Pro Shop. The average net profit as a whole is approximately 30%.

Pass holder Sales are \$5,000 ahead of previous season. The month of April was very strong generating over \$60,000 in revenue as of 4/28/2014. The course is beginning to see many groups joining exclusively with out of town individuals wanting to play the best public course in New England.

Mr. Mark Jacobs inquired about the pricing and combination of passes sold thus far. Mr. Kevin Laing stated that the most popular pass is the Twilight pass holder. The second most popular is the senior pass. There has been no lost revenue with either pass based on the current cost. The fees for non-resident Twilight pass holders were increased since last season.

The course is under budget \$29,000 in expenses. Management is always looking to save in all areas, especially those that are controllable.

The security system has been updated and is fully functional.

The new website is more colorful, functional and more informative with the various social media outlets. Mobile and online bookings are up and coming for the near future.

Maintenance Updates

Mr. Mark Mansur, Superintendent reported that the course is off to a slow start due to the cold and wet weather. Mr. Mansur stated that the crew has begun some sporadic tree work and repairing wash outs from the winter season. However, washouts were noticed in the native areas where drainage holes appeared.

The irrigation system has been primed and ready for use. Despite the cold winter, there were only five irrigation breaks which have been repaired.

This time of year, maintenance crews focus on preventive sprays and fertilization of the golf course. Taking full advantage of spring rains allows maintenance to focus on cultural issues. The course did very well during the winter months. There was no disease on the course.

Recently, the tees and greens were fertilized and the fairways are starting to sprout from the dormant feed over the winter. A true grain will appear as the weather warms which should assist

with filling in divots. Golfers are still encouraged to repair their own divots. Maintenance will attempt to fill divots once the loaded mix arrives.

Mr. Mark Jacobs inquired about utilizing a better foundation divot mix so that it does not rinse out so quickly during rainy periods. It was noted that once the “seed” foundation stays in the bottle, it begins to germinate and grow. Mr. Mansur will inquire about any other product that can be mixed in order to help with the repair of divots.

All environmental requirements have been met and approved by the Army Corp of Engineers. The report issued by Mason & Associates supports the wildlife certification with the Audubon Society. Mr. Carr indicated that pictures of wildlife on the course would be displayed in the lobby as well as on the GPS indicator on carts.

The range picker and tractor arrived and working very well. Management spends approximately \$15,000 per year in range balls.

The carpet replacement is beginning to show wear, tear and mold issues. An estimate was received to replace the carpet in the amount of \$10,000 with a 3-5 year life span. A light skimming and varnish can be placed as an overlay on the floor of approximately 4500 square feet for \$14,000 with a 10 year life span.

The tent and wall replacement is estimated to cost approximately \$12,000 - \$15,000. The cost for set up and break down is about \$3,000.

Cart Paths

Mr. Jon Colman inquired about plans for curbing and patching on cart paths. Mr. Mansur indicated that there have been several discussions with the Public Works Department about this issue. Some of the work needed was put out to bid and follow up discussions are needed.

Mr. Jacobs inquired about a pothole repair and curbing program for the golf course. The Public Works department went out to bid just for the curbing project and its estimated cost was \$40,000. There is no funding available in this year’s budget.

Mr. Jacobs also stated that the repair of the cart paths allow golfers to play as much as possible. Repairing and maintaining them will only increase the overall course investment.

Councilor Rivers stated that the initial discussion was to have the Public Works department make the necessary pothole repairs and complete the curbing.

Mr. Philip K. Schenck, Jr., Town Manager stated that the Public Works department went out to bid to get a comparable cost. In addition, due to their workload in house, if there was a reasonable bid to complete the project then it would be contracted out. However, this curbing issue will be revisited for further discussions.

In addition, Mr. Schenck, Jr. proposed developing a replacement plan to discuss during budget season on an annual basis. There was an allotment of \$50,000 placed into an account to address upcoming capital expenditures for the golf course. He also inquired about the necessity to prioritize a study to be completed on the cart path replacements. The average cart path width is 8 feet. Mr. Schenck, Jr. referred this project to Dave Melesko, Director of Leisure Services for follow up on a replacement plan.

Mr. Mansur mentioned cracking on the cart paths is beyond liquid repairs. The recommendation to replace and repair potholes in just temporary and patching will conflict with the overall aesthetics of the course.

Councilor Seldon expressed concerns about accurate pricing to generate increased revenues, in order maintain the overall value of the course. Mr. Mansur stated that 85-90% of the cart paths are good. He also reassured the committee that there is an excellent working relationship with the Public Works department.

Staff Updates

Mr. Mansur noted that seasonal college students were hired to begin work in May.

Mr. Jacobs expressed the need to extend employment opportunities to those individuals who can learn the business versus persons providing short term labor. There is a definite need to create a succession plan for the maintenance department.

Mr. Mansur also mentioned that some long term retirees' employees are having some medical issues and may not return for this upcoming season. There are new retirees inquiring about employment of which he hired 2 individuals on a part time basis for morning hours. He has also interviewed 5 individuals over the last two months and no one meet the necessary qualifications.

Vacancies in the maintenance areas are being substituted with additional seasonal staff at this time.

Overall, Mr. Carr reported that a Billy Casper Golf Employee Satisfaction Survey was given to employees recently. The course scored 80% along with an evaluation of mystery shop scores and some guest comments/feedback. The staff is very pleased with Management and the atmosphere at Wintonbury Hills. The overall success of this course speaks volumes to the creativity and attentiveness of the management staff.

Status of Food and Beverage Service

The Tap Inn Restaurant upgrade is completed. Mr. Carr presented pictures of improvements to the committee for review.

The next themed night of “Wine and Tequila” will be held on May 24, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.

Other Business

Wounded Warrior Project

Mr. Ryan Phelps mentioned a Billy Casper Golf initiative to support the Wounded Warrior Project on August 11, 2014. This is the World’s Largest Golf Outing in which over 110 golf courses nationwide participate. In support of this project, over \$770,000 gross donations were received in 2013. It is expected to gross over \$1,000,000 for 2014.

There was an issue with supporting this event at Wintonbury Hills again this year. These issues were based on the amount of donation actual given to the charity as well as whether or not the donations were benefitting the warriors themselves.

Based on these concerns, Management and this committee ensued in a detailed discussion whether or not to participate in this event. There were several concerns addressed regarding the amount donated to the charity, how much to charge for the actual event and advertising/marketing strategies.

The committee decided to participate in the event again this year. Management and staff will sort the figures and determine the best fee to charge and donate.

Adjournment

It was moved by Councilor Rivers, seconded by Councilor Seldon and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 p.m.